

SPIRIT OF THE PRESS.

EDITORIAL OPINIONS OF THE LEADING JOURNALS UPON CURRENT TOPICS—COMPILLED EVERY DAY FOR THE EVENING TELEGRAPH.

Lying for the Right.

From the N. Y. Nation. To any person interested in lies and liars the Presidential campaign offers an opportunity for successful investigation such as is rarely met with. At no other period do the liars show themselves so fearlessly and are the lies to be seen in such abundance and variety.

The classification of lies devised by the New York Tribune is now the one most generally received, and on the whole of lying going on around us, but at no other time is there systematic lying with reference to a fixed object. In ordinary times men lie loosely and individually, for all sorts of objects, without order or method. During the campaign they lie on a preconcerted plan, by columns of battalions, every lie being uttered in combination with thousands of others. The interest of the occasion to the scientific observer may therefore be imagined.

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It ought to be observed, however, that campaign lies are, unlike the common lies of ordinary periods, told upon a definite theory, and that theory is that to do a great right it is sometimes lawful to do a little wrong. There is very little gratuitous and utterly wicked lying in a Presidential canvass. We have no doubt whatever that even Brick Pomeroy comforts himself with the reflection that his lies are helping in the accomplishment of a great end, and are therefore excusable. To say that Grant is a beastly drunkard, or that he uses stolen plate at his table, is a small matter; whereas to defame Grant, relieve the South from her shackles, and overthrow the tyranny of the radicals, would be a great matter. Therefore it is well to lie on, the guilt of lying, like the guilt of killing, being dependent on circumstances. We feel satisfied, too, that if an examination of motives could be made, it would be found that a large number of the frauds on the Government are committed on a similar principle. The amount that any one man can steal from it, the cheat says, is hardly felt by the nation, while it adds enormously to his happiness and that of his children, and may produce a marked improvement in his character. Of course a regular thief of the lower grade does not number self-improvement amongst the objects of his stealing, but there is no doubt a large number of poor peccators who do. There are few poor men who do not feel that they would find it far easier to be honorable and conscientious if they were well off, and plenty of them put their scruples to sleep by dreams of the pious uses to which they will devote their booty—the churches they will build, and the widows and orphans they will comfort.

It must not be forgotten, too, in judging Brick Pomeroy and his like, that his delusion, if our presumption as to his state of mind be correct, is a very ancient one, and has been and is still shared by men who stand well with their own consciences as moralists and reformers. Lying has been freely used in the service of the very best of causes during the last three hundred years, ever since, in fact, the principle of association for religious and philanthropic objects came into common use, and since means of publicity began to be extensive. Two Jesuits reduced it to an art, and made it one of their most powerful weapons, openly proclaiming that the use of calumny against the

enemies of the order or of the faith was at least excusable, a doctrine which still has a strong hold on the minds of large bodies of excellent men in every Christian country at the present day, though doubtless if presented to them in its naked simplicity they would indignantly repudiate it. Many of our readers doubtless remember Pascal's delicious story, in the "Provincial Letters," of the quarrel between the Jesuit, Father Alby, and M. Puya, a priest of a parish near Lyons. M. Puya published a little book, inculcating the duty of attending one's own parish church, instead of running about after strange preachers. The Jesuits were then preaching a good deal, and Father Alby thought the book was aimed at them. So he denounced M. Puya, who was an old and respected clergyman of unblemished reputation, from the pulpit, as a man of licentious habits, whose intrigues with women were notorious, who was suspected of being an impious heretic, and who deserved to be burnt at the stake. M. Puya was overcome by these accusations, and after some negotiation, finding what the trouble was, formally declared that nothing was further from his intention than to attack the Society of Jesus, which, on the contrary, he honored and loved. Whereupon Father Alby said that it was his belief that M. Puya meant to attack the Jesuits which had led him to use language complimentary of, but that denouncing better what his intention was, he declared there was nothing to hinder him from holding M. Puya to be a man of enlightened intellect, of profound and orthodox learning, of irreproachable manners, and, in a word, a worthy pastor of his church.

Now, this sounds very comical, but the principle on which the worthy father acted has by no means completely fallen into disuse. It is seen in a very coarse and brutal form in the campaign lies of the newspapers about the candidates—in, for instance, the World's daily contradictions with the last three or four months of what it said three years ago of Grant's talents and character, the facts, except his nomination for the Presidency, repeating precisely the same. But it is also found in quarters where more attention is paid to moral distinctions. On many of the reform platforms there is very little trouble taken to ascertain whether stories which are being circulated by the members of the disadvantage of men considered unfaithful or unfriendly to the cause are true or false. We would not charge the same gentlemen with being slanders, but they certainly give little sign of caring whether they are slanders or not before they pass them on. Between the circulation of such stories as they spread abroad a year ago, of Grant's having been drunk in the streets of Washington, and the invention of them, there is doubtless a distinction of which human critics are bound to take notice; but if it be a distinction to which the Divine Intelligences will attach much importance, either our logic or theology is at fault.

We might multiply illustrations of the same sort indefinitely from the columns of the "organs" of various reform movements. A good biting story against an "enemy of the cause" is generally published cheerfully and without inquiry; if his acts admit of two constructions, the worse is put upon them, circumstances which tell in his favor are carefully concealed, or his reputation passed over without notice. A striking illustration of this particular form of lying was afforded after the impeachment trial, when the accounts given of Trumbull, Fessenden, and others were in such ludicrous contrast with the accounts which the same organs would have given of the same gentlemen a week before the verdict, in a controversy with a Democratic opponent, that one could almost fancy in reading them that one heard the joyous waggling of the devil's tail. In the temperance agitation, there is visible the same tendency to "help on the work" by loosening the obligation of truth-telling. The rules of evidence are not so strictly enforced in examining into a charge of drunkenness against a temperance drinker as they would be in an inquiry conducted by the same persons on any other subject; and we fear presumptions are adopted against unbelievers by good Christians with a laxity which they would not display if it was the fair fame of a brother believer that was at stake. The tendency to be untruthful is, in fact, in such partly involuntary, and the victim is often entirely unconscious of it himself.

That the world is growing worse in this respect we do not mean to say. On the contrary, considering the prodigious increase of temptation, and of population, we think it is growing better. We doubt, for instance, whether any campaign has ever been conducted in this country with so great a regard to truth and decency as the Republicans are displaying in the conduct of this one. Whatever indications of deterioration there may be are found not in the fact that the number of liars increases, but that the liars are a better kind of people, and that the bad effects of lying on society at large are being hidden by the good use made of lying in particular cases. But we cannot consider the effects of lying for the right fairly without remembering that modern society is weakest on the side of the virtues which are covered by the term bona fides. It is gaining prodigiously in humanity and sympathy, but whether it is gaining, or seems likely to gain, in honesty, truthfulness, scrupulousness, and candor, is still a disputed question; and it is to this side, therefore, the attention of moralists should be directed.

One other thing ought not to be overlooked, and that is, that confining the term education to the training children get in schools is a dangerous abuse of language. Children get a very small part of their education in schools; their moral training, so called, hardly anything. Their notions of truth and justice they get from what goes on around them in society—from the conversations and the speeches they listen to, the newspapers they read, the acts they see their relatives commit; and those who flatter themselves that the injurious influences of a canvass filled with lies and vituperation, or of the spectacle of the use of immoral agencies in the furtherance of a good cause, on the opening mind of boys, can be counteracted, on the whole and in the long run, by set lessons in morality or religion, given by paid teachers or even by parents, deceive themselves. Every man who mounts a platform or takes up a pen, therefore, with the determination not to be too fastidious, or "too particular" about accuracy, provided he can "help on the work," is a corrupter of youth, who puts the world back two steps for the one he helps it forward, and on whom a cup of hemlock, if it would be lawfully administered to him, would not be thrown away.

What is the Actual Amount of the National Debt? From the N. Y. Tribune. To the Editor of the Tribune.—Sir:—In your issue of the 18th instant you say the public debt was not \$2,600,000,000, but \$2,510,000,000, and that is every cent that we intend to make it, or to pay.

"In your issue of the 20th, you answer so much of the article above quoted from as related to the position of the late Thaddeus Stevens on the bond question, but you do not say notice that portion of the article which I have quoted from. Am I to understand that your statement was wrong and that of the World correct? Has the public debt been increased during the last year? Do not you virtually confess that you were wrong and the World right in thus letting its statements go uncontroverted? Will you please answer these questions? I am accustomed to regard the Tribune as trustworthy authority, and want to know if I can so regard it still." H. EDWARDS. "Binghamton, Aug. 22, 1868."

The Tribune's Answer. The last official statement of the amount of the national debt was made public on the 7th, and appeared in the Tribune on the 8th instant. Any man who can read and see what it is, and we do not see why there should be any dispute about it. Let us see what there is to differ about. Two or three great companies are engaged under the patronage and control of the Government, in opening communication by railroad across our country from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Probably not less than one hundred thousand men are now employed and paid by those companies to cut timber, dig ore and coal, made iron and roll it into rails, etc., grade tracks, build bridges, lay track, etc., etc. The Government backs this enterprise to a limited extent, with its credit, besides giving the corporations certain lands along their respective tracks. Every cent of the cost of these railroads is to be paid by the companies which will own their respective roads; but the Government lends them its bonds to a prescribed amount per mile to facilitate the work. The companies undertake to pay, and thus far have paid, the interest on those bonds as it accrues, and they further agree to pay the principal of the bonds as they fall due. The total amount of these bonds issued to them up to the 1st inst. was \$32,210,000.

Now, then, we do not reckon those bonds a part of the debt of the United States, though there is a contingent, remote possibility that one or more of the railroad companies may fail, and that their roads may not prove a sufficient security for the payment of their bonds. The Railroad Companies owe the bonds; they assume to secure the Government against loss by a second mortgage of their respective roads; and they cannot fail (we think) without defaulting on that. And we understand Mr. McCulloch to have held the same view of them. If he is now trying to elect Seymour and Blair, that circumstance may account for his putting this contingent liability of the Government into his last official statement of the debt. If you concur in that purpose, you will probably pronounce it right to do so. Now, Mr. Edwards, do you, or do you not, consider the bonds loaned to the Pacific Railroads and payable, principal and interest, by them, a part of the current expenses and debt of the Government? We do not. Apart from this, the national debt, as set forth by Secretary McCulloch in his last official statement, is as follows: Debt bearing interest.....\$2,088,371,800 Debt past due, and therefore no longer bearing interest.....18,000,175 Greenbacks, gold certificates, and special currency, bearing no interest.....410,332,891 Total.....\$2,600,378,756 Less cash on hand.....110,954,279 Actual debt August 1st.....\$2,491,324,477

We repeat that this is all the debt owed by the United States, and really much more than all; because it is notorious that a large percentage of the greenbacks and postal currency of the country are in the hands of the vessels, and in many other ways. Of the eighteen millions of "matured debt not presented for payment," including over eight millions of Seven-thirties, which long served as a sort of currency, it is inevitable that a considerable share has likewise been lost. But, even reckoning all this as nothing, and counting the liability of the Government on its bonds loaned on mortgage to the railroad companies at half their face—that is supposing the Government should ultimately be compelled to pay half of those bonds through the failure of the companies—there is still a fraction less than he hastily stated in the article referred to by our correspondent. We were mistaken in saying that a correct statement of the debt would reduce it to \$2,478,000,000; we were not mistaken in our fundamental position that (apart from the contingent aid rendered to the Pacific Roads) we have been steadily reducing both expenditure and debt ever since the surrender of the Rebel armies.

Have we now made this matter clear? Or must we go over the figures again?

The Internal Revenue Imbroglio. From the N. Y. Times. The quarrel about appointments which embarrasses the administration of the Internal Revenue act is the best possible illustration of the badness of our civil service system, and of the folly which rejected the Tax bill, as originally presented by Mr. Schenck. That bill proposed the only proper course—the organization of the Internal Revenue branch as an independent bureau, with its Commissioner as the responsible head. Under that plan unity of purpose and responsibility would be guaranteed to have been furnished for the selection of competent subordinates, and the revenue would have profited accordingly.

The effect of rejecting the plan is seen in the present disgraceful condition of affairs, brought about by the evident anxiety of the President and his Secretary of the Treasury to use the internal revenue machinery in the interest of Seymour and Blair. The curse of the system which Congress endeavored to amend was found in the facilities it afforded for prostitution to the basest personal and party purposes. The revenue became the prey of the men who should have been its guardians, and a service in which integrity and capacity ought to be the only standard became the refuge of knaves and incapables. The country was scandalized as well as plundered by its servants. The immediate responsibility was divisible between the Executive and the Senate; but the great first cause of the evil arose out of the controlling power of partisanship in the matter of appointments and removals.

The tax scheme as enacted undoubtedly achieves some reforms. Honestly and efficiently administered, it might be expected to produce an ample revenue, and at the same time to extend increased consideration to business interests. But what is the result? The whole system is disorganized. The measure designed to protect the revenue is for the time rendered practically null and void by a squabble about appointments. The position of Mr. Rollins himself is unfortunate. His conditional resignation introduces an element of uncertainty at a period when concentration of force is desirable. But the more serious difficulty is in regard to the appointments under the act. Had the Commissioner been empowered, as he should have been, to organize the service with exclusive reference to efficiency, it would have escaped the intermeddling of Mr. McCulloch, who, when patronage is concerned, is the alter ego of Mr. Johnson. As it is, the Commission can but recommend; the Secretary appoints. And as the former selects Republicans, while the

latter, doing the work of the Democrats, wants only Democratic officers, the service is brought to a stand still.

The proposal of compromise attributed to the Secretary, makes the case worse. He is willing, it is said, to divide the patronage with Mr. Rollins, with one half assigned to Republicans and the other to Democrats. We are told that this may be the end of the contest. If he, we will listen indubitably to the charge of gross partisanship upon the Secretary, and will teach Congress the hopelessness of any plan of reform which is subject to his discretion. The Commissioner may be influenced by a partisanship in his selections. That is not improbable. The presumption is, however, that the question of fitness also enters into his choice; while on the Secretary's side the only thing apparent is a determination to make duty subordinate to partisanship. The whole controversy is humiliating. But it will not be without benefit if it add strength to the movement for civil service reform, and stimulate Congress to make internal revenue administration as far as possible independent. What the service wants is able, faithful officers; and these it cannot have so long as the President, through the Secretary of the Treasury, may abstract business in behalf of a political party.

Are We a Nation?

From the N. Y. Herald. Mr. Bancroft must look to himself, or, on his return, the Hon. Charles Sumner will have a long account with him. As is well known, the Hon. Charles is precise in matters of pronunciation; capable, even, of a spasm on a spondee, and what, therefore, must be his emotions at seeing his historical friend permit himself to be called, without question, "Americanum Civitatum Confederatum ad Augustissimum Borussia Regem in Legatum," as he is in his late German degree. There is something in this that is awful, something that begs the whole question, and if permitted, forever puts out of favor that choky little Sumnerian conundrum, Are we a nation? If the latinity of the Bonn doctorate be admissible, we are not a nation, for civitatum confederatum is, as the learned Charles must ere this have seen with pang, the States united by a league. This being that rank heresy in which Copperheads delight, its apparition in a foreign mark of honor shows this ambulatory ambassador on that, must have had grievous effects on Charles. And furthermore, since Mr. Bancroft takes, as we believe, the national view of it, how comes it that the attention of the learned inditers of this instrument was not drawn by him to the peculiar technology by them employed? According to this tawdry philosophy of the day, which asper foreign monarchies in its use of such words as "loyal" and "rebel," the titular designation of this country, "The United States of America," does not mean the United States, but the united States. The idea is that the States are not simply joined together, but that they are so intricately and homogeneously that they are, properly speaking, States at all, but rather a nation; and it is pleasant to find that even in the far-off University of Bonn the true original of this Government is so far kept up as to find expression in its academic degrees. The confederatum of Mr. Bancroft's doctorate gives the exact idea of this Government, conveying in the con the fact, and in the fields the manner of Union. These United States are not a nation. It was never intended that they should be. It would provoke a smile to speak of the Roman nation as it was in the days of the Gracchi. The Roman republic is the title by which it is great in history. It did not become a nation till Domitian, Caligula, and Nero sat upon the throne. Thrones, body-guards, huge armies, golden crowns, the will of the man on horseback go with nation—they are incompatible with the name or idea of a republic, and the American republic, and not nation, let us hope, will continue to be as long as we, the People, remain the first words of that instrument which forms the bond of union between otherwise independent and autonomous States.

Bonn has said a good word, and the attention thereto of the nation-mongers is invited. Senator Wilson on the Stump—A Sledge-Hammer Speech. From the N. Y. Herald. Senator Wilson, as a stump speaker, is a mighty man in Israel. His late effort at Bangor, Me., was a sledge-hammer speech. It is the condensed milk of Greeley's two wonderful volumes on "The American Conflict." It gives us a graphic picture of the decline and fall of the pro-slavery Democratic party and of the causes and consequences of the slaveholders' rebellion, appropriately beginning with poor Pierce. The speaker reminds us that his first message to Congress, Pierce gave his pledge that the repose of the country should receive no shock during his official term, and the orator then enlarges upon the repeal of the Missouri Compromise as the fatal shock to the domineering, slavery-propagating Democratic party. He dwells upon the ominous border ruffian conflict in Kansas, which may be called the bloody overture of the great Rebellion, and he reproduces the Southern and Democratic threats of disunion, secession, and civil war in the event of free government in 1850. He reproduces the promises of Northern Democrats to Southern revolutionists in 1860 and 1861, the political events which marked the beginning of the war and its progress to the end, including the various forms and shapes of the Northern Democratic opposition to Congress, the administration, the army, and the loyal masses of the North, while engaged in the work of suppressing the Southern Rebellion, and in all this to the close of the war the historical sketch of the political issues, parties, and conflicts involved is not only exceedingly like the flattening of a piece of red-hot iron with a sledge-hammer by rapid blows well laid on, but it is substantially true.

But upon the issues and conflicts which have arisen since the war, and especially upon the great underlying and overshadowing issues of this Presidential contest, Mr. Wilson ceases in a great degree to give us the truth of history, and deals too largely in the assumptions and conclusions of the mere party politician for a clear exhibit of the political situation. He tells us that the Southern Rebel elements were predominant in the late Democratic National Convention, and he undertakes to prove from Northern and Southern Democratic stump speeches that the whole party, rank and file, under the sway again of their old Southern leaders, are in this campaign simply fighting to revive and establish "the lost cause" of the Southern Confederacy. In this presentation of his case Mr. Wilson makes the most of the abundant capital furnished by such intractable and hopeless fire-eaters as the Rebel Generals Forrest, Albert Pike, Henry A. Wise, and Wade Hampton, and the unlucky Rebel Admiral Semmes; but still the great Massachusetts stumpser in Maine does not meet the great issues of this canvass.

What are they? They are the great issues arising from the measures and the policy developed by Congress since the war. The people have the heavy burden to bear of an enormous national debt; they are taxed by the national Government to the extent of four or five hundred millions a year to meet current expenses and the interest on the debt, the

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